

VZCZCXRO4823  
PP RUEHROV  
DE RUEHJM #0114 0121518  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 121518Z JAN 09  
FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3820  
INFO RUEHKK/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NSC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 000114

SIPDIS

NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE. NSC FOR ABRAMS/RAMCHAND/PASCUAL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/12/2024

TAGS: [KWBG](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [KPAL](#) [IS](#)

SUBJECT: CONTACTS SAY WEST BANK SYMPATHY FOR GAZA, HAMAS  
GROWING AT PA'S, FATAH'S EXPENSE

REF: JERUSALEM 91

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, per reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary. In separate January 9 conversations, three prominent Palestinian contacts voiced concerns that the conflict in Gaza is increasing the popularity of Hamas and reducing support for President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen), Fatah, and the PA. Fatah Revolutionary Council member Jibril Rijoub said West Bankers see the PA as collaborating with Israel. Military Intelligence Chief Majid al-Faraj said Fatah will face a significant challenge in any future Palestinian elections. A former head of the PA Bar Association said Hamas's resistance is earning it the respect of many West Bankers. End summary.

¶2. (C) Fatah Revolutionary Council (FRC) member Jibril Rijoub said Hamas has effectively portrayed itself to West Bankers as the faction that will fight for Palestinians' rights and is successfully casting Fatah and the PA as "collaborators." This approach, he said, will have "strategic consequences" for the future. He said Abu Mazen must improve his response to events and attract Palestinian support, or he will be forever weakened by the crisis. Following this conflict, Abu Mazen will have to address national reconciliation seriously, Rijoub said.

¶3. (C) Military Intelligence BG Majid al-Faraj said Israeli operations in Gaza have increased Hamas's public support across the Muslim world, particularly among West Bankers. He said Abu Mazen has been unable to effect meaningful change for Palestinians, which could lead many to conclude that "resistance" accomplishes more than negotiations. If the PA does not achieve tangible changes on the ground -- such as the end of Israeli incursions into West Bank towns, the removal of significant checkpoints, or longer-term, strategic concessions -- Abu Mazen and Fatah will lose legitimacy. If Abu Mazen cannot deliver tangible changes, he said, Fatah will face an overwhelming challenge in the next PA elections, regardless of when elections are held.

¶4. (C) Former Head of the PA Bar Association Ahmad Sayyad told PolSpec January 9 that Hamas's popularity in the West Bank has increased as a result of Israeli operations in Gaza and at the expense of Abu Mazen and Fatah. Sayyad said West Bankers are frustrated by the PA's perceived support for Israel, citing the ban against demonstrations in the West Bank. He said West Bankers sympathize with the plight of Gazans, even if not all support Hamas. Factional loyalty is less important, Sayyad said, than a desire to see someone stand up to Israel and defend Palestinian rights. West Bankers see the PA and Egypt failing to do this, and, as a result, Hamas is earning their respect, he said.

WALLES